United Nations A/HRC/31/NGO/154

General Assembly

Distr.: General
22 February 2016

English only

Human Rights Council
Thirty-first session
Agenda item 9
Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance, follow-up and implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action

Written statement* submitted by the International Youth and Student Movement for the United Nations, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[15 February 2016]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

GE.16-02687(E)

Please recycle

Recognizing and Combating Afrophobia

Recognizing and Combating Afrophobia

The International Decade for People of African Descent which has been declared by the UN General Assembly for the period 2015-2024 represent an important achievement in the process of implementing the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action which 15th anniversary is commemorated in 2016. The International Decade must be used effectively to combat racism against people of African Descent in every respect in the spirit of "Recognition, Justice, Development".

We welcome the active use of the term "Afrophobia" by the High Commissioner for Human Rights for the first time in his address to the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent on April 1, 2015 and on several successive occasions during 2015.

The International Youth and Student Movement for the United Nations (ISMUN) together with the World Against Racism Network (WARN) has spearheaded the promotion of this term in the UN Human Rights mechanisms and consider the growing acceptance of this term in the UN Human Rights system as important..

In its resolution 21/33 adopted on 28 September 2012 the Human Rights Council deplored " the special form of discrimination faced by people of African descent known as 'Afrophobia'".

The active use by the Human Rights Council of the term Afrophobia was in response to the recommendations of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent at its tenth and eleventh sessions. In the report of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent from its twelfth session adopted on 26 April 2013 the Working Group affirmed that "The recognition by the Human Rights Council in its resolution 21/33 of the term "Afrophobia", as had been recommended by the Working Group, requires an active and systematic follow-up in order to assure the full implementation of this important assertion of the special and unique form of discrimination faced by people of African descent and assuring its equal use with analogous terms that are used to address the stigmatization and prejudice against ethnic, religious and other vulnerable groups."

We hope that the group of countries, the European Union, which has regularly objected to the introduction of the term "Afrophobia" both in negotiations on resolutions and in statements at the Council will be able to reconsider its objections. We are i.a. referring to the statement at the Human Rights Council on 27 September 2011 where the EU stated that "establishing a hierarchy of those affected by racial discrimination is not acceptable. Therefore the EU rejects the introduction of potentially harmful terminology as "afrophobia". Regrettably the EU continued its opposition to the Afrophobia term at the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Effective Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action at its thirteenth session in October 2015 and prevented the Working Group from expressing its appreciation of the active use of the Afrophobia term by the High Commissioner.

In the context of the above it should be noted that the "Afrophobia" term has gained an increased use in European countries and at the international level and also been included in government ordinances relating to work against discrimination in one EU country, Sweden, without "harmful" consequences. The term is for example actively used by the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention and the Swedish Minister for Integration of the previous government commissioned the Multicultural Centre to conduct a systematic review of the current situation on afrophobia experienced by Swedes of African descent and which report was presented on February 3, 2014. The report indicated that Afrophobia, discrimination against persons of African descent, is widespread and a problem in Sweden and will hopefully help the government to better address the situation. When the newly elected Swedish Prime Minister presented his inaugural address to the parliament on October 3 2014 he included the fight against Afrophobia in his government programme. This demonstrates the importance of this form of recognition of discrimination against people of African descent. It can furthermore be noted that the European Parliament Anti-Racism and Diversity Intergroup

(ARDI) composed of Members of Parliament from different parties have formed a special Working Group on Afrophobia chaired by one of its Co-Presidents.

Anti-black racism targeted against people of African descent was the first form of discrimination to be given a name when the term "Negrophobia" was introduced in the United States in the 1830:ties and used in the campaigns against slavery and for racial equality. "Negrophobia" for example predated the appearance of "anti-Semitism" term by many decades. Afrophobia is only a modernized form of the older outdated term.

In the United Nations the "negrophobia" term was first included in the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance to "examine according to his mandate incidents of contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, any form of discrimination against Blacks, Arabs and Muslims, xenophobia, negrophobia, anti-Semitism, and related intolerance" as adopted by the Commission on Human Rights at its fiftieth session in 1994. The "negrophobia" term disappeared in connection with the World Conference Against Racism and its early follow up for the only reason that any term including "negro" had become totally outdated and unacceptable, in particular in the English language. While the replacement of "negrophobia" with afrophobia was discussed in that connection, it did not take place and therefore deprived people of African descent the recognition it had previously had in listings of existing forms of discrimination. It is therefore a timely measure that the Human Rights Council and the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent as well as the High Commissioner for Human Rights has taken to reintroduce this recognition of the special and unique form of discrimination that people of African descent face. It would be appropriate and desirable that this recognition of the Afrophobia term be strengthened and further developed by the Human Rights Council at its 31st session and be part of the commemoration of the 15th Anniversary of the DDPA with the purpose to accelerate the implementation of the Programme of Activities for the International Decade for People of African Descent.

The World Against Racism Network (WARN), an NGO without consultative status, also shares the views expressed in this statement.